



## Saint Agnes Hospital, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1896-1961

W. MONTAGUE COBB, M.D.

*Professor and Head, Department of Anatomy, Howard University,  
Editor, Journal of the National Medical Association*

### PIONEER COURSE FINISHED

THE reader response to the first three numbers in the *Journal's* Hospital Series, separately inscribed to institutions which have been important in the history of the Negro in medicine in the United States, has indicated a widespread interest in and appreciation of the project. There is every reason to believe that the goal will be realized of placing in better perspective the contributions of these hospitals, many of which are unsung and little known.

Two of the first three hospital numbers, those for Provident Hospital, Chicago (May), and Mercy-Douglass Hospital, Philadelphia (January), were dedicated to institutions located in northern cities, and founded by Negro physicians who had encountered unbreachable walls of racial prejudice in established institutions (Daniel Hale Williams, Provident, 1891; Nathan Francis Mossell, Douglass, 1895). The third, that for the John A. Andrew Hospital, Tuskegee Institute, Alabama (March), saluted a hospital established in the deep South on the campus of an educational institution (Tuskegee, 1902) and planned originally for school service and training needs. Booker T. Washington, founder of Tuskegee and a Negro, was also founder of the hospital. All three of these hospitals are going concerns.

We come now to a hospital which has just ceased to exist but which was established (1896) during the same period, and located on the grounds of an educational institution also in the South. This time there are religious auspices and

the lay founder and leading early medical personalities were white, and, quite significantly, all women. The annals of the Saint Agnes Hospital of Raleigh, North Carolina, show clearly that the dedication and service of five women were vital to the early years of the institution. They were Mrs. Sara Hunter, founder and wife of the principal of St. Augustine's College, Dr. Catherine P. Hayden (M.D., Colorado, '94), first resident physician and superintendent, 1900-?, Dr. Jennie A. Duncan (M.D., Illinois, '10), who succeeded her, Dr. Mary V. Glenton (M.D., Northwestern Woman's, '93), who followed Dr. Duncan in 1918, and Miss Ednah H. Wheeler who served as matron and general supervisor of lay matters from 1900 until her death in 1922.

The most important Negro personalities connected with St. Agnes were Bishop Henry Baird Delany and later his son, a physician, Dr. Lemuel T. Delany. Dr. Lawson Andrew Scruggs, a graduate of Leonard (Shaw) Medical School in Raleigh in the class of 1886, was the first Negro resident physician. The Scruggs Medical Society of Raleigh, an affiliate of the Old North State Medical Society and the National Medical Association, is named in his honor. Beginning in the 1910's and continuing until his death, Dr. Hubert A. Royster, the leading white surgeon of Raleigh, was a bulwark of the institution, headed its medical staff for a long time and befriended it in innumerable ways.

Until about the mid 1930's St. Agnes had made slow progress and it was envisioned that it might be developed into a first class modern institution.



THE FIRST BUILDING

With an obsolete building and no endowment, however, and no means of obtaining a new plant and maintenance funds, it became a victim of the new formulae for meeting the rising and astronomical costs of hospital construction and care. With great distinction, it fought a good fight, it kept the faith and it finished its course.

The institution was housed in a four story stone building built in 1908 and had a 75 bed capacity. There was also a separate frame building for the Nurses Home.

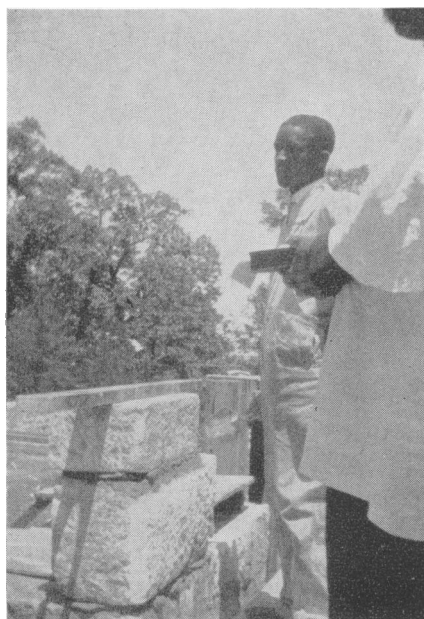
#### PUBLIC APPROVAL

St. Agnes Hospital closed its doors in April 1961 after nearly 65 years of service since its establishment on the grounds of St. Augustine's College, a Protestant Episcopal institution, on St. Luke's Day, October 18, 1896. In 1922 it was referred to, despite obvious handicaps, as the only well equipped hospital for Negroes between Washington and New Orleans, serving not only North Carolina, but adjacent Virginia and South Carolina. In that year three white-robed members of the Raleigh Ku Klux Klan stalked into the first meeting of a campaign to raise \$40,000 for the Hospital and gave five ten dollar bills to the Rev. Milton A. Barker, who was presiding over the meeting, as first payment on a \$100 contribution. A letter from the Klan read as follows:

Dear Sir:

Believing in the sincerity of the movement and being in sympathy with the furthering of such a worthy and beneficent cause, the klan hereby declares its interest in the success and future welfare of the St. Agnes Hospital for colored people and hereby makes known its desire and willingness to lend support.

It gives great pleasure, therefore, at this opportunity to tender, as a visible sign, the pledge of the Raleigh Klan to this cause, written for the sum of one hundred



LAYING OF CORNERSTONE, 1906



MRS. SARA HUNTER

dollars. And enclosed herewith are five ten dollar bills as the first payment on this pledge.

With the hopes of the clan for the great success of the campaign,

Yours very truly,

KLIGRAPP

Raleigh Klan No. 1, Realm of North Carolina

Josephus Daniels, editor of the Raleigh "News and Observer" and formerly Secretary of the Navy in Woodrow Wilson's cabinet, wrote in support of the campaign that he had heard of critics "who are tired of drives," but that he would be glad "to see a drive every month for some worthy cause" and the case of St. Agnes Hospital had such merit that he implored, "Let us in this case be generous to the point of sacrifice."

The Rotary Club of Raleigh also endorsed the drive, taking note of the fact that this was the first time in the history of the institution that it had asked the public for any money.

One patient said,

Nobody told me to come here, I came myself, and when I woke up in the morning and heard the singing in the Chapel, I knew that I had been directed by God and to my Father's House.

The drive for \$40,000 was successful, a total of \$43,071.72 being subscribed. Of this amount, \$25,371 was raised by Negro workers and \$17,751 by committees of white workers.

What was the nature of an institution which could earn such a comprehensive measure of community approval? Let us first take some local eyewitness testimony.

From the account of Dr. Mary V. Glenton we learn that

An old hack driver came one day to take a patient to the station who was well enough to go home, she was broken hearted at leaving her Hospital friends. The driver looked at her for a minute, and said, 'I brings these wimmen, and they cries all the way 'cause they has to come, and I takes them away, and they cries all the way 'cause they has to go home.'

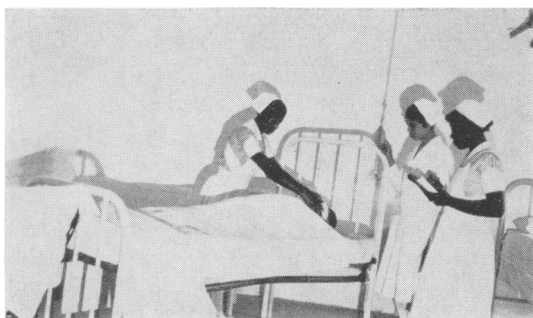
Dr. Glenton also tells us

One day two women came to see Dr. Hayden, and, as she says, a picture they were as they stood in the hall when she came down. Women from a plantation down the river, with clean starched dresses, and clean gingham aprons—large ones—and large white sunbonnets, within which the dark faces beamed with a great kindliness. They said, 'We could not come to Mothers' Meeting on the Mothers' Donation Day, but we brought our donation today. We have never been in the hospital, none of our kin have ever been in this Hospital, but women from down our way have been ailing, and not able to do a day's work for months and months. And they came here to this Hospital, and then came back to us like their old selves, well and happy. So we are glad to give our donation.' One handed out five cents, the other six sweet potatoes, and they had walked eight miles to present them!

Mrs. Sara Hunter, the wife of Dr. Aaron Bertis Hunter, principal of St. Augustine's School in Raleigh, was the founder and prime moving spirit of the school until her retirement in November 1919. Mrs. Hunter had long noted the great need for hospital facilities for Negroes in the Raleigh area. In 1895 Dr. and Mrs. Hunter attended the general convention of the Episcopal church held in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Here Mrs. Hunter made an address to the Woman's Auxiliary describing the urgency of the need and making a plea for funds for a hospital. As a result, two gifts provided \$1100.00 for the purpose. One was from the Woman's Auxiliary in the sum of \$500.00 through a Miss Julia Emery. The other was in the amount of \$600.00 from a Mr. I. L. Collins of Orange, California, in memory of his wife, Agnes Collins. Thus arose the oft repeated statement that "Saint Agnes Hospital was founded with faith, love and \$1100.00.

#### EARLY DAYS

The residence of a Dr. Sutton on the school



NURSES IN TRAINING



SURGICAL WARD

grounds had been vacant since his death some months before and this large house was made available for the hospital. After some enlargements and alterations, the institution was formally opened as aforementioned on St. Luke's Day, October 18, 1896.

During the first two months the hospital had only four patients and four nurses in training. Dr. James A. Boyer tells us that the first patient was a desperately ill fever case (malaria or typhoid) who recovered. The first surgical operation was performed on April 6, 1897 and was successful. Miss Agnes Griffin was the first baby born in the hospital, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Griffin, members of the staff. Miss Griffin later became a physician and was among the first Negro interns at Bellevue Hospital, New York.

Apparently the training of nurses was part of the initial purpose of the hospital. The first Commencement of the Training School for Nurses was held on April 21, 1898. There were two graduates, Anna Augusta Groves and Effie Wortham, both of Raleigh. Dr. Hubert A. Royster, later surgeon-in-chief of the hospital, delivered the address.

From beginning to end St. Agnes Hospital was beset with financial difficulties compounded by losses from three destructive fires. Dr. Glenton provides a laconic description of early circumstances. She wrote, "But while the Hospital was to the neighborhood a thing of wonder, it was, as are most of our Church Institutions, at the start, a makeshift." In the original building, Dr. Sutton's converted house, the following circumstances obtained:

No water in the house, except one faucet in the kitchen.

No hot water, but what could be heated on the ward stoves.

Whole house heated by wood.

Two small steamers for sterilizers (the results untrustworthy), formed the operating room equipment—a probationer stationed outside of the operating room door, to hand in hot water when called for, and to empty buckets of used water.

No screens in windows or doors, and flying things innumerable, with wings small and great.

Laundry equipment—three ordinary wash tubs, flat iron heater, and a big iron kettle in the yard for boiling clothes.

Ice only in extreme emergency, and it had to come from town. Automobiles were not invented, and trolleys were still an oddity, and Mr. Hunter's horse Mellie with a two-wheeled cart had to carry the ice and other things from Raleigh—four miles.

Cool water was brought by hand from the spring to bathe Typhoid patients, and the nurses carried it. And that was for old-fashioned Typhoid treatment before the days of vaccine. There was no sewerage.

The Office was Reception Room, Doctor's Living Room, Dining Room, Surgeons' Dressing Room on operating days, and sometimes the Morgue.

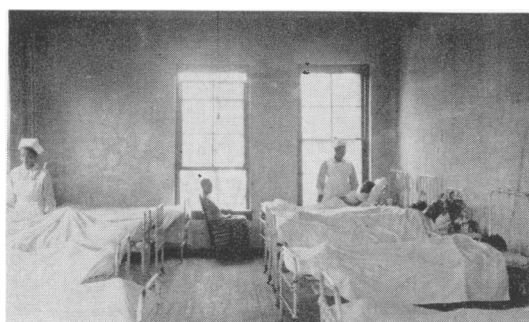
No plumbing anywhere—only earth closets.

No Diet kitchen—the trays kept on a shelf in the kitchen.

No gas for cooking nor for lighting; simply oil lamps.

Not always enough food for patients; nor the proper kind for nurses and staff.

Although St. Augustine's is an Episcopal school, the Church evidently never assumed financial responsibility for the Hospital although the project had the approval of the clerical authorities. Bishop Joseph Blount Cheshire of the local Diocese issued a strong appeal in support of the 1922 fund campaign, noting that the Hospital "has done its work quietly and modestly. It has established its claim upon our support. It now comes out of its obscurity and asks the people that they examine and see what a valuable public asset they have by the existence of St. Agnes Hospital and that they now assume their responsible part in developing and sustaining it."

**NURSERY****MEDICAL WARD**

Because the statement of Bishop Cheshire is quite revelatory, it is reproduced in full:

An appeal is being made to the people of Raleigh in behalf of St. Agnes Hospital. This institution has grown up quietly in connection with the development of St. Augustine's School, almost without the knowledge of many of the people of Raleigh.

Many schools in and about Raleigh offer educational advantages to the young colored men and women. There is only one St. Agnes Hospital. No other hospital of a like character and capacity is available for our colored people who stand in need of medical and surgical treatment. It holds out its helping hand to old and young. It has little or no endowment but it endeavors not to turn any poor man or woman away. It is believed to be the largest and best equipped hospital exclusively for colored people in the country South of Washington.

Its large stone building has seventy-five beds; but is not able to accommodate all who need and desire its help. Increased accommodations are demanded in order to meet the necessities of our colored people. Moreover, the wear and tear of its more than fourteen years of good service call for repairs and replacements in fabric and equipment. Deterioration from use necessitates repairs and renewals.

It has proved its value in our community life. It has never before made any considerable demand upon the people of Raleigh. It has done its work quietly and modestly. It has established its claim upon our support. It now comes out of its obscurity and asks of the people that they examine and see what a valuable public asset they have by the existence of St. Agnes Hospital and that they now assume their reasonable part in developing and sustaining it.

Up to this time we may say that St. Agnes Hospital has been a free gift to Raleigh and the people of this section. No considerable part of its establishment or maintenance has been contributed by our people. It has been the work chiefly of one noble woman, Mrs. Hunter, the wife of the Rev. A. Burtis Hunter, late principle of St. Augustine's School. Seeing the great need of a hospital for colored people in this section of the country she secured the use of a frame building upon the grounds of St. Augustine's School, and in 1896 opened St. Agnes Hospital. In 1908 the present stone building

was erected, largely by the Industrial classes of St. Augustine's school.

The money was raised at first by the personal influence and solicitation of Mrs. Hunter among her own friends and acquaintances; and then gradually she enlisted sympathy and assistance of Branches of the Woman's Auxiliary in Woman's all over the country. Contributions and offerings coming from individuals and churches and organizations in the most distant Dioceses.

It has been in the nature of a gift to Raleigh and this section of our country. Up to this time we here in this section have done little for it. We are now called on to take up and sustain and to help to carry on this institution which has done and is doing so blessed a work for the poor, the helpless, the sick and the suffering.

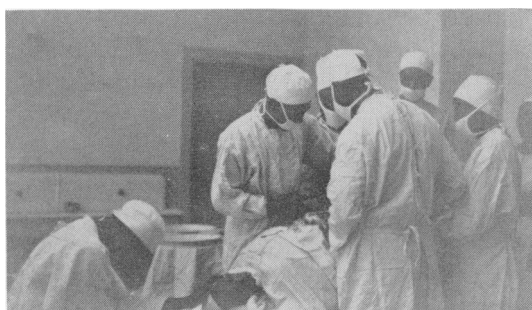
Along with the development of St. Agnes Hospital a training school for Nurses has grown up. One hundred and sixteen graduate nurses have gone out to do their beneficent work among black and white. Thirty three pupil nurses are now preparing to stand the examination before the State Board of Examiners. The physicians of Raleigh and many of our citizens can bear testimony to the character and to the work of the St. Agnes nurses. The writer of these lines has most grateful memories of their skillful and faithful services in his own family.

The most skillful physicians in our city are upon the staff of St. Agnes Hospital, and gladly give their best services, with, or without remuneration, as the ability or the patient, and the circumstances of the case require.

The colored patients of St. Agnes also deserve a word of hearty commendation. They are mostly from a class of people who have but little money; yet they generally manage to pay the moderate charge made for their care and treatment. During the year 1921, 1,034 patients were treated for 15,583 hospital days.

The current expenses of the hospital for the same year were \$25,390.55, of which amount the patients paid the sum of \$17,483.00.

This is the institution which now appeals to the people of Raleigh for assistance. Its facilities and accommodations should be increased. Wear and waste in its equipment should be repaired and replaced, and proper means and facilities supplied for the continuance of its



AN OPERATION



NURSING CLASS

good work. It extends its aid to the utmost of its ability to all our colored people without distinction; it is largely supported by a stream of generous gifts and donations from all parts of the country; and it is as little as we can do to respond gladly and liberally in cooperation with a work carried on largely by other sections of the country for the benefit of our Southern colored people.

Blessed is he that considereth the poor and needy; the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble.

In 1900 fire broke out in the frame house which was the hospital and the patients were safely transferred to the Taylor Hall, the school assembly hall. An emergency case requiring immediate operation appeared. The handling of this situation exemplified the spirit which kept the hospital alive during its two and a half generation history. The nurses carried equipment requiring sterilization over to the burned building to use the stove there because it was the only source of heat for sterilizing. The stove, however, had a hole in its bottom. Dr. Catherine P. Hayden who had been installed as resident physician superintendent of nurses of the Hospital on the preceding Easter Monday, filled the hole with some freshly mixed cement workmen had just prepared and a good fire was obtained. Instruments and dressings were sterilized. The operation was performed with improvised arrangements in the burned building and the patient afterward transferred to Taylor Hall where she recovered.

The second and final building of the Hospital, shown on the cover of this issue of the *Journal*, was completed in 1908. Dr. Glenton informs us that, "Mrs. Hunter raised every penny of the \$40,000 that built it." Ground was broken for the new structure on May 27, 1905, by Dr. Catherine P. Hayden. The cornerstone was laid on May 29, 1906, by Bishop Cheshire with the Rev. Henry Baird Delany assisting. The last stone was set in

place on August 6, 1908 by the Rev. Delany, who later became vice-principal of St. Augustine's School and Archdeacon and Suffragan Bishop in the Church. Bishop Delany was proud of being able to say that he had laid the first and last stones in St. Agnes Hospital. His son, Dr. Lemuel T. Delany, helped to quarry the stone which was taken from the grounds of the school. Dr. Delany became an eminent physician and was a valuable member of the St. Agnes staff.

This new structure suffered a fire which again necessitated the use of the school's Taylor Hall as a temporary hospital. After repairs the institution enjoyed a brighter period. This however, was short. The ever besetting financial problems kept rearing their ugly heads. Traditionally the annals had read, "We have been wonderfully blest so far; but the treasury is empty. We depend upon the daily mail for our support."

On December 17, 1926, a third and serious fire was suffered by the Hospital, but again there was no loss of life or injury. The patients were carried by the men students of St. Augustine's College to the Nurses Home and the Bishop Tuttle School. The damage was severe but by the end of the school year restoration was complete.

#### A FEW MILESTONES

Despite inadequate financial backing, the services rendered by St. Agnes were such as to ensure a continuous growth until the 1930s. The Nurses Training School brought much goodwill to the institution. In 1903 extensive alterations were made and Mr. George C. Thomas of Philadelphia gave the Hospital \$3000. In 1915 the nurse training period was increased from two and a half to three years. An especial burden was placed on the facilities of St. Agnes in the summer of 1916





REUNION OF ST. AGNES FORMER INTERNES

by the closing of the Leonard Hospital of Shaw University, a Baptist School in Raleigh under whose auspices the Leonard Medical School had operated.

In March 1928 Council on Medical Education and Hospitals of the American Medical Association approved St. Agnes for the instruction of internes and in the autumn of the same year the Hospital was placed on the approved list of the American College of Surgeons. This was followed in the same month by a gift of \$30,000 for a new Nurses Home from the National Woman's Auxiliary of the Episcopal Church, voted as its triennial meeting in Washington, D.C. Supplementary gifts of \$15,000 from the Duke Foundation and \$15,000 from the Rosenwald Fund were soon received. The Nurses Training School was promptly given an "A" rating by the North Carolina Board of Nurse Examiners. The new Nurses Home was dedicated on June 4, 1930, during the Annual Conference of Church Workers.

Dr. Boyer tells us that for many years January 21 was "St. Agnes Hospital Day" in Raleigh, on which churches, stores and many citizens made generous donations of cash and goods.

During World War II, St. Agnes participated in the Government Training Program for nurses as a contribution to the war effort and received some Federal aid for enlargement of quarters and other facilities.

The nursing school and interne training program necessitated a sizeable patient load, so that by 1921 indigent patients had come to be a significant portion of the Hospital's census and important income was derived from payments from the city

and county for the care of such patients.

The regular number of internes was three, although in some years there were said to have been four. The hospital was approved for internship until about 1954, so that during the 26 years of this program, about 80 physicians received training under it. In addition, for some periods the hospital had approved residency training programs in Obstetrics and Gynecology and in Surgery.

We do not have an accurate listing of the number of nurses graduated. In 1922 there had been 116 and 33 were then in training. If one estimates an average graduating class of 10, this would mean that over 500 nurses were trained at St. Agnes, a commendable record.

#### SUPERVISORY PERSONNEL

In addition to Dr. Hayden, Dr. Duncan, Dr. Glenton and Miss Wheeler, already mentioned, other supervisors of record of the hospital were Mrs. Frances Worrall, R.N., Dr. A. W. Tucker, Mr. Charles W. Walker, 1945-47, Atty. Charles S. Templeton, 1947-?, Miss Ruth Feider, William Acton, 1950-51, Gordon Poole, 1951-59 and Ralph Bartlett, 1959-61. Of these only Mr. Walker was colored. Medical staff-wise it was long axiomatic that "Lem" (Dr. Lemuel T.) Delany was the pillar upon which most depended.

Perhaps nothing can so convincingly portray what the hospital owed to Mrs. Hunter as an excerpt from Dr. Hunter's annual report of St. Augustine's College in June 1909:

A good deal of my work in the way of correspondence devolves upon Mrs. Hunter in my absence, and the strain on her has at times been such that I have hesitated

whether I ought to go on with my work. The care of her household, which includes three of the teachers and often other visitors, would be enough for an ordinary woman; but in addition to that, she has the superintendency and entire financial responsibility of Saint Agnes Hospital and Training School for Nurses and she is my bookkeeper for the school, keeping at least 200 accounts of mine, and many more of her own. She has charge of all the missionary boxes and missionary store and the correspondence connected with them.

She is in charge of the Sunday School, of the mothers' meeting, gives occasional counsel in working and sewing departments, and is resorted to generally by everybody who has any question to be answered or difficulty to be solved.

#### FINAL TRANSFERS

By 1942 the financial resources of the hospital had become so limited that the Board of Trustees of St. Augustine's College deeded the entire St. Agnes property to an independent St. Agnes Board in order that the Hospital might continue to receive public funds for the care of indigent patients. This action was occasioned by a ruling of the City Council that public money could no longer be given a private institution. It was agreed that the property would revert to the College whenever the Hospital ceased to operate. This re-transfer has now taken place.

The new Wake Memorial Hospital now cares for patients of Raleigh and Wake County without respect to race. Although the Wake County Medical Society still has racial bars, the eight Negro

physicians of Raleigh have all been admitted to the staff of the Wake Memorial Hospital with privileges for both indigent and private patients, according to their individual qualifications. These doctors have each been given hospital committee assignments and one of them, Dr. Nelson Perry (M.D., Howard, '27), serves on its Executive Committee. This is an instance in which Negro physicians have not lost access to hospital facilities because of the closing of a Negro hospital and it proves also that the excuse for barring a physician from hospital facilities because race excludes him from his local county society is not valid.

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